

# The Nightingale Sings at Midnight

by Mystic Vapoleon

Category: Pok mon

Genre: Romance

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-28 09:00:00

Updated: 2001-01-29 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:46:33

Rating: M

Chapters: 4

Words: 16,780

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: My other passion next to fantasy! Jessie and James romances! This, my most beautiful and touching work, James is involved in a terrible accident, which changes both his and Jessie's life forever.

## 1. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> The Nightingale Sings at Midnight

### The Nightingale Sings at Midnight

It was one of those mornings where nothing ever seems right, goes right, or even feels right for that matter, cold, gray and unforgiving. In the early hours of the day, mist enveloped everything, choking the world with its thick blanket, forbidding sound and movement, and punishing those who dared disturb its placidity with an even thicker layer. It was horribly easy to lose your way in the abyss, and when the event finally did occur, the stillness caused anything to shrink back, and refuse to help, for fear of the same fate. Fate? Fate is even crueler than such mornings as some people have experienced first hand. Fate, it seems, works in curious ways as well. Occasionally, it does whatever it takes to ensure the outcome of its whim. No one is an object, and sometimes fate is cruel, other times it is benevolent, and on the rare occasion, it is the kindest it has ever been, concealed in tragedy.

Jessie awoke that morning in a particularly foul mood. She fumbled her way into the kitchen, where the dishes from the previous night's dinner still lay filthy and haphazardly piled in the sink, hardly the Saturday morning she had pictured and yearned for all week. She cursed under her breath as she stepped on a fork lying on the floor with a bare foot and kicked it angrily underneath the half open refrigerator. Meowth lay asleep hanging from the open door, the last remaining milk carton dripping quietly on the floor.

She scowled and resigned to her fate, gently kicking James who lay asleep at the table. He jumped suddenly, snorting at the sudden intake of air and gently lifting his head from the pages of his book. He looked dazed and confused, the glasses that had been resting on the bridge of his nose now haphazardly hanging from his ears. Jessie smirked and continued on her way. All the time she had known James, she had caught him with his glasses on a mere few times. He hated them with a passion, and he only really needed them to read, and only in dim lighting, so those were the rare occasions when he wore them.

James swatted them hastily from his face as it darkened a slight shade of red. "Slick James Bond," he turned around and glared at the barely awake Meowth. "Ah, shut up furball," James replied sliding gently from his seat. "So, what's on the agenda today Jess?" he asked as he sauntered over to the refrigerator. Jessie flipped the switch on their ancient coffee machine and yawned loudly. "I dunno, he's giving us a better assignment today, at least that's what he told me," she replied leaning her elbows on the counter as the sounds of morning slowly began to ward away the eerie silence of the still morning. James shrugged and dejectedly closed the heavy white door, casting a glare as icy as the floor beneath his feet at the feline. "Pig," he mused. Meowth shrugged and shot him a toothy grin. "Dere was nobody dere ta stop me now was dere?" he asked sarcastically. "Fine, you win," James said and moved for the mugs in the cabinet above the sink.

Jessie chuckled, nothing cheered her more than a good quarrel in the morning. "You guys are pathetic," she said glancing out the window. Her formerly cheerful expression returned to the bleak one of first thing in the morning. Outside everything was a dismal shade of gray, dark ominous clouds hanging low over the landscape. "Looks like rain," she said removing the completed pitcher of coffee off of the machine. She poured it swiftly in one motion into the two awaiting cups. Her hand stopped short, noting that the carton of milk that James usually held ready for her was not there. "Hey James? Where's the milk?" she asked slightly disturbed he had not completed his part of the long time tradition of the morning. "In Meowth's gut," he answered winking.

Jessie frowned and shrugged. "Pig," she echoed to James' previous derogatory comment. He looked to Meowth to ensure that the name would stick with him, and the cat stuck his tongue out in response. "I guess we'll have to drink it black, after all, we should be getting the mission soon, it sounded real important on the phone," Jessie said gingerly sipping the strong liquid, "I could use the caffeine." James chuckled and started for his bedroom to change, but was stopped by a sharp rap at the door. All movement and sound ceased, as if the moment were suspended in time, a knoll of premonition of what was to come. "I...I'll get it," James muttered and walked stiffly to the door. Jessie frowned deeply and chewed a fingernail nervously as James disappeared to the front door of their small cabin.

James turned the knob slowly, afraid to break the thick silence that seemed would lash out at anyone who dared. He swallowed hard and opened the door the slight crack that the chain on it allowed. A gun barrel followed, resting gently against James' forehead as a white folder was roughly shoved into his hands. "You two have been asked to take on what could be the most important mission of Team Rocket history. Do you accept?" the gruff voice asked quickly, and straight

to the point. "Seeing as I can agree, or have you blow my brains out right here and now, I'll say yes," James replied snatching the folder inside. "Giovanni trusts you two, you're our most reliable agents. Good luck, and try not to get killed, someone might miss you," these were the final words from the Rocket, who fled immediately afterward.

James held the folder tightly and trodded mechanically back into the kitchen, throwing it lightly onto the table and sitting down heavily. "Damn, damn it all to hell," he muttered under his breath. Jessie nodded in agreement and sat down next to him to examine their newest suicide mission.

They did not chase the kid and the Pikachu anymore, that had merely been vacation time, their normal assignments were normally quite difficult, and lately, had gotten downright life threatening. The twerp and his friends had ventured too far away from base for them to comfortably pursue, so now they had set up a permanent residence in the inconspicuous suburbs or their center of operations, Saffron City. "Well James, shall we prepare for trouble?" she asked in a shaky voice. "Yeah, and make it...Uh, what's one hundred times?" he asked sarcastically. "Hopefully not our odds of death," Jessie replied bitterly.

James nodded silently and pulled the contents out of the folder, a look of near panic spreading over his face. "James? What is it?" Jessie asked. "No time, the bastard gave us no time!" he shouted as he finished reading the short briefing letter from Giovanni. "What?!" Jessie exclaimed snatching the thin, watermarked paper from James' grasp. She quickly scanned for the mission start time and raised her eyes to meet the emerald ones that watched her every move. "Well, we'd better get ready, we'll need all the time we can get," she said and assumed her usual role of organizing the materials for ease of the job to be done. Meowth leapt deftly onto the counter and read over her shoulder, a smug grin coiling his lips. "So, we're gonna to destroy an entire organization."

@---

Jessie stared at the front of the night-blackened building, her stomach turning in anticipation. They'd had only the day to prepare, having gotten the assignment early that same morning and in Jessie's professional mind, the whole thing was completely disorganized. "Come on James, where are you?" she whispered anxiously.

James lay on his back, squeezed into an air duct just above the main floor of the several story high building, the words of Giovanni's letter ringing in his ears. This whole organization was a resistance threat, headed by none other than the notorious traitors Butch and Cassidy. They'd wanted revenge after Giovanni had decided to let them stay in jail for punishment, and after they had escaped, built their Team Resistance from scratch. They wore similar uniforms, with a knife grotesquely stabbing through the crimson 'R'. This was a team built on insanity driven revenge, and wouldn't be too much trouble to denounce in James' mind.

He touched the small gun at his hip gently, just to ensure it was still there, and pulled a small digital timer from his pocket. "Sorry guys, this is what you get for messin' with the boss," he muttered and swiftly taped it to the inside of the duct. He looked at it

remorsefully and punched in a few numbers. "I can't believe he gave us only 20 minutes to escape," James thought to himself as he hit the last key on the small pad and with a quiet beep, the timer on the Team Rocket trademark detonation device began slowly counting downwards. "Hey, did ya hear that?" James froze at the sudden voice of a guard below. "Yeah, it was comin' from there!" A single shot followed the outburst, barely missing James' leg. He closed his eyes and swallowed hard, praying that they would not fire again. "Jessie, if I don't make it...Don't cremate me," he thought to himself as another shot narrowly avoided his side. "Dumb ass, there's nothing up there," the other guard hissed cruelly. "Shit, now Butch will have my dick for ruining his air conditioning," the other replied and a loud argument sparked between them as they walked down a nearby hall.

James sighed in relief and wiped the beads of sweat gathering on his forehead. "Someone up there still loves me, and god help me if I ever resort to sailor speak like those two peasants. Butch and Cass have really lowered their standards," he whispered grinning, and rolled over to execute his escape for the next part of the plan.

Jessie scowled and looked at her watch for the fifth time in about three seconds. "Where the hell is he? He's never late!" she whispered anxiously. "Maybe he's lyin' dead in an office somwheres?" Meowth offered. Jessie snarled and whapped him roughly with the back of her hand. "Boo," she jumped as she felt a light tap on her back, and a dramatically lowered voice, whirling around. James stood behind her, a smug, child-like grin on his face. "Jesus! Do you want to make me shoot you?" Jessie asked gripping her pounding chest. "Hmm, no, I think I've had enough brushes with death tonight. Shall we take care of the ring leaders of this circus then?" he asked lightly. "Brush with death? You'll tell me later, but now, we've got to take care of our old friends before that bomb goes off," she replied deftly taking off running for the back of the building. "Come on Meowth! We're gonna have us a good ol' fashioned assassination! Yeehaw!" James whooped in a tragically poor western accent. Meowth rolled his eyes and bounded after his companions.

The office was not difficult to locate, the building was a simple office establishment, and the trio located the traitors with merciful ease. They crouched furtively in the same air duct James had been in only moments before, and he had shuddered when they passed the bullet holes where he had nearly lost his life. "Look, there's the bastards," Jessie said pointing through a nearby grate.

Butch and Cassidy both sat behind ominous desks, laughing at something, both of their venomous voices sending a shiver down Jessie, James, and Meowth's spines. "Butch, we're so close now! That old coot will rue the day he betrayed us!" Cassidy cackled. Butch smirked and stuck the end of a pen in his mouth, chewing it absent-mindedly. "Revenge is so sweet," he agreed.

James grinned and cocked the handgun he held aimed at Butch's head. "Enjoy it while it lasts punk, ready Jess?" he whispered. "On the count of three. One...Two...Three!" all fell silent and two silenced shots echoed in the small air duct. Butch and Cassidy stopped all motions suddenly, as if time itself stopped for this very moment. No one dared to breathe as two sets of eyes rolled dramatically backwards as their owners fell forward, blood dripping from two neat holes between them. "Nice aim James," Jessie mused gently blowing the

lazy smoke away from the barrel of her gun. "Not so bad yourself," he added.

They both could not help but grin as they heard a shrill shriek from the office below, followed by angry shouted and obscenities from fellow workers of Team resistance. Little did they know they had chosen a bad place to execute their quarry. "Up there! The grate on the air duct!" Both their hearts stopped as gunfire echoed around them. "Shit! James this way!" Jessie cried diving on her stomach from the direction they had come.

James reached out to her, trying to warn her that they had come from over the hallway, where the Rockets were amassing. "No! Jessie!" was all he managed to squeak as she stopped suddenly, a bullet grazing her shoulder. She cried out in pain and clutched it, exactly the wrong thing to do. "Right above you men! Fire!" a voice yelled. James drew in a shaky breath and dove forward, shoving Jessie out of the way as the pipe was riddled with bullets. Sound did not register in Jessie's brain as she felt James hold her about the waist pulling her away from where her life was in peril. She could hear her own heartbeat, and her own panicked breathing, and in all the confusion, James cry out in sheer agony, and then silence.

She lay where they both had fallen, listening to the conversation below. Amid the congratulations and praise for the accurate gunman, the soft pat of liquid dripping to the ground was just barely audible. "Oh god, please no," she breathed getting up. James lay still next to her in a disheveled heap, exactly where he had fallen. "James, no," she whispered shaking him gently. He did not stir. "Oh god don't do this to me. James!" she hissed, tears gathering in her eyes. "Bastards, I'll kill them all! I'll god damn kill every one of them!" she sobbed turning James onto his back.

No wound was visible, which caused her to sob harder as she placed a hand tenderly behind his head. She pulled it back covered in blood. Alarmed, she gently moved to his side, turning his head to where she had placed her hand to confirm her suspicions, blood leaked in a steady stream from a neat hole just above his ear. Jessie covered her mouth, stifling an anguished wail and turned away from the body of her best friend. "Jessie! He's got a bullet in his brain, he's dead! We gotta save our own skins now!" Meowth called quietly, tears evident in his voice.

Jessie gritted her teeth and gently cradled James in her arms. "What are ya doin' Jess?" Meowth asked anxiously, "dis buildin's gonna blow!" Jessie let the tears fall, running a free finger through the blood soaked blue hair. "I won't let his body stay here he...He was our best friend, he deserves better," she whispered. The feline nodded in understanding, offered no more protests and solemnly led the way out of the building. They exited through the very same vent they had come through initially, running as fast as possible toward the woods bordering the city.

A loud explosion rocked the small area as anything and everything that hinted at rebellion was destroyed with two things. Two, well-aimed gun shots, and a single bomb James had set up earlier in the basement. Jessie felt a pang of extreme loneliness as she ran, carrying the limp form of a young man she had the pleasure of calling her friend. The one that had been through everything with her, ever since they had met at school, both social outcasts, and made fast

friends. They had shared everything, closer than either of them knew. The tears flowed freely, and even more unabashed as she recalled the pleasantries of the morning, how light-hearted it had been. She smiled vaguely, that was how she would remember James.

When the blast had subsided, and all lay still in mourning over the countless lives lost, Jessie and Meowth stopped, breathing heavily from exertion. Jessie found she could no longer hold James, and carefully laid him down in the soft grass, crossing his arms over his chest respectfully. "Goodbye old friend," she whispered.

"Jess...Why?!" Meowth moaned throwing himself onto the ground. Jessie said nothing, but took the Pokemon into her arms tenderly, quieting him. "I take it James here didn't make it, to be honest I wasn't sure if any of you would, I must say I'm pleased you two did." Both Jessie and Meowth looked up to see Giovanni standing over them as they sobbed. "Boss, as much as I respect you, I need to get this off of my chest. You stupid, lying, irresponsible dick sucking piece of shit! James is dead and it's all your fault!" she screeched standing up.

Giovanni raised an eyebrow and motioned to the bushes behind him, much to Jessie and Meowth's confusion. They sprang to life, a thin wiry looking man leaping from them, resembling a dog, concurring to be at his master's disposal whatever the situation may be. "Check him," "But sir, note the bullet wound in his skull, it's highly unlikely that-" "I said check him!" "Right away." The man that was now obvious who was a doctor knelt at James' side, taking his wrist. "God as if it's any compensation! He's gone! I know it, you know it too! Who survives being shot in the head?!" Jessie yelled angrily. "James does, call for back-up he's still alive!" the doctor cried suddenly.

Giovanni grinned at Jessie, producing a cellular phone from the inside of his jacket. "No...T...That's impossible!" Jessie sputtered. "Hurry boss, we're gonna lose him soon! He's just barely here. Man, he must really have something to live for," the doctor mused taking a few medical provisions from his pocket. Jessie stumbled backwards, resting against a tree in absolute terror. "No, James is dead, I saw him get shot, I felt the blood! It's still on my hands for Christ's sake! So much of it, so much blood, so much death, why take my James from me? Who could be so cruel? So many lies, Giovanni, he set this up, it's all his fault! James is dead, and then he has to complicate things by trying to tell me he's alive? Bastard... James is dead, he died saving my life, bravest person in the world, but he's gone he's gone he's gone!" her mind screamed at her as loud and as incoherently as it possibly could before her vision swirled with color and slowly faded to black.

@---

"Jessie? Come on Jess don't you leave me too! Please wake up! Jessie!" Jessie could discern a voice, just barely audible in the black void of her mind. Light began filtering in slowly, causing her to squeeze her eyes shut harder and groan. A dull pain throbbing in her shoulder awakened her, and she slowly slid her eyes open. Vision was blurry at first, and Jessie could only discern a blinding white light over her, and a very familiar concerned voice. "M...Meowth?" she whispered opening one eye. "Welcome back to da world of da livin'," he replied grateful she had awakened.

Jessie's face instantly fell as she painfully opened both of her eyes fully. "I wish I wasn't here," she said quietly. "Jess, dat's crazy, don't talk like dat," the cat said apprehensively. "Why not? I could be with James then," "But Giovanni said-" "Screw what he said, James died. He got shot in the head Meowth, no one survives that," Jessie spat cruelly. Meowth sniffed furtively and turned away from his friend, and looked to the pale green door as it slowly creaked open. Giovanni entered, a smug grin on his thin lips, and Meowth hissed, regressing back to his feline instincts.

Giovanni held a hand up to him, composed as always and turned to Jessie. "Ah I see we've awakened, now, shall I tell you the good news or the bad news first?" he asked. Jessie lowered her eyes spitefully and looked away. "Bad," she muttered. Giovanni cleared his throat. "The bad news is the media somehow got a hold of some dirt on Team Rocket, our names are all over the news, and apparently, one guy escaped from the explosion, he's in a coma, but when he wakes up, we're screwed," he said relating the small incident that had occurred. "Well don't count on me to assassinate him," Jessie spat. "I've got another duo working on it, but wouldn't you like to hear the good news?" he asked in a much lighter tone than before. "I doubt anything is good at this point," Jessie answered.

Giovanni smiled coyly and shook a finger mockingly at her. "Oh ye of little faith, I do believe this news will brighten your day considerably," he said. "Fine," Jessie replied through clenched teeth. "James is alive, we got him here just in time, and he's resting comfortably now." Jessie's eyes widened visibly as she struggled to sit up. "No lying this time? He's alright?" she asked. "Well, not alright per say, but he certainly is alive," Giovanni replied.

Jessie nodded, looking up to the ceiling briefly, and whispering something indecipherable under her breath before swinging her legs over the side of the hospital bed. "Jessie what are ya doin'?" Meowth cried as she stumbled forward, landing in Giovanni's arms. "I'm going to see James, and I need to talk to that worm of a doctor," she replied steadying herself. "Jessie, he's not even conscious as of now. Get back into bed," Giovanni urged. Jessie shoved his hands away roughly, and stormed out the door into the hall.

Suddenly realizing that she had no clue which room James was actually in, she briefly turned back to go back inside. She frowned deeply, afraid that Meowth or Giovanni might stop her, and instead, hailed a passing nurse. "May I help you miss?" she asked sweetly. "Uh, yeah, do you know what room James LeBlanc is in?" Jessie asked looking apprehensively down the hall. "Sure, he's in 616A, on this floor, lucky fellow he was!" the nurse answered. "Thanks," Jessie said and mechanically made her way down the hall through the seemingly endless rows of pale green doors.

Jessie had always feared the Team Rocket hospital. People she had seen come in often did not come back out. She had seen everything, from wounds from being tortured, to mission accidents. She had never imagined neither her nor James involved in any of them, and her heart beat in a faster rhythm as she slowly stepped into the deathly silence of room 616A.

The only things that greeted her were the dull beeps and squawks of various monitors and machines in the room. James lay motionless in

the bed in the very center, its metal frame pushed against the wall. The wormy doctor from just after the accident sat at his side, adjusting the white bandage around his head. He looked up from his work, finally satisfied and smiled warmly as he noticed Jessie standing in the doorway. "Come sit Jessie, we need to have a little talk," he said motioning for Jessie to take the metal wire chair next to him.

She proceeded cautiously, feeling each step as she placed it carefully, rolling her foot as not to make any sound. She took the chair from the side of the bed, and placed it closer to James than the Doctor's, sitting swiftly. "So, he's alive eh?" she mused stroking James' cheekbone affectionately, finding it still warm with life. "He survived everything we put him through as well, he's tough, and the bravest person I've ever seen," the doctor replied. "Yeah, I know," Jessie said wistfully, "so, what's going to be wrong with him?" The doctor looked at her, a confused expression the only communication. "What do you mean?" he asked. Jessie looked annoyed, and slid her hand into James'. "Is he gonna be blind, deaf, retarded? What? Everybody who gets a brain injury has some problem," she explained.

The doctor sighed and placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "James was very, very lucky. He'll still have all his senses, his mind will be as sharp as ever, but I'm afraid you're right, he damaged this region of the brain here," the doctor explained pointing to where the bullet had entered his skull, "this area controls speech. It's practically functionless now the damage is so extensive to this part, and he'll more than likely be mute for the rest of his life." Jessie felt her stomach sink with this cruel twist of fate. "Never be able to talk? But what about-" "He may regain some of it with therapy, but it'll never be the same," the doctor sensed what question she was going to ask and answered it. Jessie fell silent, not even realizing how tightly she was holding on to James' inert hand. "Well, I'll leave you with him, he should wake up fairly soon. When he does, explain it to him, and just be as kind as you can," the doctor said getting up. Jessie barely heard him as she slipped from reality, into a state of mild shock.

James had always been an eloquent speaker. He rarely used foul language and had an impressive vocabulary in Jessie's mind, and had always been proud of it. She often over looked how essential and forsaken the ability of speech was, but now that she thought of James silenced forever, she realized how important it was to his being, and to everyone in the human race. It was like stripping a Nightingale of its song, and a bird with such a beautiful one, is the epitome of despair.

"I'm so sorry James, this is all my fault," she whispered. She tenderly rubbed the back of James' hand, wishing she could hear his voice just once more. She never realized how much she actually enjoyed hearing it, until she was faced with the concept of never hearing its gentle tones again. It was usually jovial, and even when he was serious it always had an underlying lighter tone. Naturally this did not surprise Jessie. She had always known he was a child at heart, and that was one of the things she liked best about him.

Her heart skipped a beat as James' eyes squeezed shut harder before fluttering open just slightly, the once brilliant emerald green irises faded, and dull. "James?" Jessie asked placing a hand on his



forehead. He looked up at her acknowledging her presence and opened his mouth to speak. A pang of hurt tore through Jessie's soul as a look of terror spread across her friend's face as no sound exited his lips. "Don't even try James, just lie still, and I'll explain everything."

## 2. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Chapter Two

### Chapter Two

The next few weeks were, in both Jessie and James' minds, the worst they had ever spent together. James found his new inability to communicate quite aggravating, often refusing to write anything. Jessie had purchased a notebook for him to write in to communicate, as he no other way of doing so, but he rarely did that. Both of them, including the sarcastic cat Pokemon had fallen into a deep depression. To Jessie, James no longer had presence, he was merely a felt entity. Without his speech, it was if he was no longer there.

"They say you can go home tomorrow, and in a few weeks you won't even have to wear the bandages anymore," Jessie said as she sat at the foot of James bed one dismal afternoon. He simply sighed and picked up the notebook, which lay at his side, scribbled something in it, and handed it to Jessie. She read it and scowled at the roughly scrawled writing. "So what?" was all it said. "Don't you want to go home?" she asked softly. James snatched the notebook away and brutally scratched another message in it. "I want to be dead." Jessie had cried the first time he had written this, but it had become such a frequent occurrence, she was able to ignore it.

In some ways, Jessie wished James could have been killed. The mere shell of his former self was absolutely pathetic. Jessie was not even sure of the last time she had seen James smile. He was depressed, and near suicidal, and Jessie was positive if he had access to anything that may have killed him, he would have done it. "James, I'm getting tired of this," she moaned rubbing her temples. "I...I don't know if I'm even going to be able to live with you anymore, and I'll be blunt as to why. I hate what you've become. You're bitter and resentful, you hate your life, you write that you want to die at least twice a day! I can't stand it, you're not my James anymore," she said, her voice growing quieter as she spoke.

James sat up as to write to her more easily, a deep frown distorting his features. "How would you feel?" he wrote. Jessie scowled at him, malice passing between the two souls. "I'll be back for you tomorrow, whether you like it or not," she hissed, and stood up swiftly. James looked away, crossing his arms over his chest bitterly. "Goodbye James," Jessie muttered softly as stormed quickly out of the room, leaving her former friend to fume.

He watched Jessie leave wistfully, even hating her slightly. "She's not my friend," he thought to himself, "if she was she'd try to understand. But she's so self-centered she doesn't care about me. She can't even begin to try to understand." A single tear rolled down his cheek as he buried his face into the starched white hospital pillow and sobbed bitterly. He cried harder than he had ever let anyone see,

harder than he had ever in his life, the absence of any sound causing him more grief. It was nearly nightfall, and when James had finally silently sobbed himself to extreme fatigue, he fell asleep.

That night was suspended in feverish nightmares and light bouts of sleep, few and far in between, generally the most miserable night James could remember having since his childhood. The nights just after the wretched to be fiancée had arrived and began teaching him were those. He tossed and turned until the night finally ended with a stream of dull gray light fell across his dulled green eyes.

Jessie had set a pair of jeans and a shirt next to his bed so he would not have to get up to change, and he took them gratefully. He sighed in relief as he shed the hospital attire and slid on his own personal clothes, finally satisfied with his garb since he had been first admitted. He looked to the window, expecting the usual bright morning sunlight, but was welcomed by a small roll of distant thunder, and a bleak looking cold light.

Curious, James slid cautiously from the bed, the cold floor unforgiving to his bare feet. He stood up, and closed his eyes to ward off the points of light that danced in the corners of his vision. He had not stood on his own feet since the accident, and he was forced to hold the metal frame of the bed to prevent the dizziness from sending him to the floor. When he finally felt strong enough to stand upright, he proceeded cautiously to the window at the far end of the room.

The curtains were drawn tightly over the spotless glass panes, and as James parted them gingerly, he was welcomed by the soft sound of rain hitting it. He sighed, a perfectly dismal day for his perfectly dismal mood. Jessie would be showing up any moment to take him home, back into the real world, which he dreaded more than anything. At least at the hospital people had known his speech was impaired, and they never treated him like he could, and the thing he feared most was ignorance. How people would react to his being mute drilled into his mind now that he had a glimpse of what it was like. Even his best friend had turned away from him. He absent-mindedly fingered the thick white bandage around his head as he thought, grateful he would not have to wear it much longer, and groaned as he spotted their jeep, hood drawn over the top to keep the rain out.

He rolled his eyes and looked away from the window to his packed belongings set near the door. He felt a pang of remorse at the familiar items, reminders in their own of a much kinder time, and wished he had never met Jessie or Meowth, never joined Team Rocket. He gasped and slapped himself in the forehead lightly, causing his wound to throb dully. "No, James that's crazy, don't blame Jess or Meowth. It's not their faults it's yours. You chose to risk your life to save your best friend, and look what you lost. There's no one to blame but me," he thought to himself as the door slowly opened.

James lifted his eyes slowly to see both Jessie and the same wormy doctor from when he had first arrived standing there. Jessie looked annoyed, her arms crossed bitterly over her chest, her spiteful glare turned to James. He returned it, conflict tacitly passing between the former friends. Both Jessie and James had barely spoken, or written, to each other since James' first experience with his handicap and had subconsciously discontinued to be friends. In Jessie's mind, her best

friend in the world had died up there in those air ducts, shot by the rebels they had crushed. In James' mind, his best friend had betrayed him, and he could never forgive such a crime.

Never taking her glare away from the dull eyes full of hatred, Jessie picked up the suitcase and leaned against the doorframe, still scowling. "Well James, I'm sure you're anxious to get home, shall we schedule a date for a check-up?" he asked cheerfully, and handed a pen and notebook to James. "Anytime, call Jess, just get me home now," he wrote. The doctor read it and smiled obnoxiously. "I understand, I'll call, and now if you'll follow me, I'll go ahead and check you out," he replied.

James stood up slowly and followed both Jessie and the doctor down to the reception area. A few papers required his signature, and time seemed to dissipate as he practically found himself suddenly in the jeep. It was silent, the only sounds the rain and the wipers on the windshield. Meowth sat in James' lap, purring softly in joy that his friend was alright as this was the first time he had seen him since the accident, they had not allowed Pokemon in the hospital and James had not been permitted to leave. He purred to console his own depression at seeing his old friend's sadness, and perhaps in an attempt to cheer him, but nothing would coax James to even so much as smile.

When they arrived home, James proceeded directly to his room, Jessie and Meowth to the kitchen. "One question, where's James? Was dere a mixup at da hospital or sumthin?" Meowth asked solemnly. "He's gone Meowth, he'll never be the same," Jessie answered sitting at the table to leaf through the mail she had picked up on the way in. "And to think I was falling in love with him too," she muttered to herself as one in particular caught her eye, a small, personal letter in a black envelope, and a red wax seal embossed with a capital 'R' on the back. Jessie's heart nearly stopped as she lifted it from the pile, and broke the seal with a fingernail. "Jess, maybe we should just burn dat," Meowth warned.

Jessie ignored the cat and pulled the letter out, which unfolded on its own accord and began to read:

To the current leader of Rocket Team 'Meowth' Jessica Burkely,

It has come to my attention that your team has suffered an accident on a mission for personal reasons to me. I feel a great remorse at this, and though I am thankful your partner is alright, this does not come without its consequences. The skilled professionals at the Team Rocket medical facility have informed me that the other human member of your group, James LeBlanc, has been left with a handicap, namely, mute. I regret to inform you that I cannot have a Team that has any disadvantages to anything or anyone, so I have a proposition for you. Since you three have been some of my loyal and trustworthy agents, I'm willing to provide you with support. As I know how much you care about James, I won't force you to another team, as I usually would. You will become his caretaker, I trust you will stand by him, and help in any way you can. Paychecks will arrive in the mail biweekly I hope I have provided you with enough. Wish James luck with the speech therapy for me.

Sincerely,

## The Boss

Jessie snarled and crumpled the thin paper in one hand. "God! Why me?" she yelled angrily. James frowned as he heard Jessie's angry screams and obscenities from the kitchen and drew his knees into his chest, rocking softly, trying to ward off the inevitable tears. He looked wistfully out the window, where rain dripped lazily from the bare branches of a wiry tree in the back yard. James let the tears fall as he heard the joyous song of a bird from the depths of it, and rested his forehead against the cold glass, watching as a Nightingale hopped cheerfully onto a limb near the window.

It opened its beak as another beautiful strain of notes poured from the depth of its soul and James sorely wished he still had one. All his life, he had been oppressed, molded to what his parents felt was best for him, and what they considered a perfect child. He was just beginning to experiment with expression, but now that had been robbed from him as well. He picked up his notebook and the pencil that usually accompanied it and absent-mindedly traced a wavy line across the page. He sighed as the silver marks seemed to carry themselves across the page, creating a jagged rocky cliff.

Finally deciding to draw something, James roughly sketched a Growlithe standing on it. He drew its head thrown dramatically back in a mournful howl and frowned. The Growlithe looked miserable enough, but he could not decide over what. He thought for a moment, penciling in the body of a young boy lying on his back. Blood seeped from a dozen different wounds, as well as from the corner of his mouth. His clothes tattered, and his loyal Pokemon wounded as well, the boy in the drawing was dead, his best friend mourning him.

James finished the drawing by rubbing the pencil lightly to blend it and nearly smiled at his work. For something he had just done spur of the moment, it was good. The drawing, unlike most, had depth, not like the flat images he had seen most people do and more importantly, emotion. He continued to cry, perhaps even a bit harder than before looking at his accurately forlorn and grieving Growlithe.

James put the notebook down and looked out to the now dark yard. The Nightingale had ceased to sing, and had long since left its perch and James wished it well. A thing of such beauty should not befall any ill will or misfortune. He tucked the notebook into a drawer without a second thought and got up moving to the full-length mirror he kept next to his closet. He stood in front of it, scowling at what he saw. He was thinner than he remembered, but then again, he had not so much as looked in a mirror since the accident.

He gasped as placed a hand over his mouth as his eyes came to rest on the reflection of his face. The other hand moved to his sunken cheek, and traced over the bony surface until it reached the black area beneath his lifeless eye. "God, what have I become? I know I'm miserable, but now I look the part!" he thought to himself, "what happened to James? And who is this I'm staring at?" His face fell further as he turned away from the crystal clarity of the mirror and he sighed deeply. "James is dead."

His eyes soon found themselves upon two, very familiar red and white spheres resting on the table. Meowth had probably set them there for him, but his Pokemon were the last things he wanted to see. He felt

remorse at this, feeling instead that his old friend Weezing should be comfort, not pain, but reassured himself that the faithful gas cloud would only bring him sorrow. It would not understand the situation, and its innocence was pitiful in James' mind. His Pokemon deserved the best, so he swept the Pokeballs into his palm, his notebook under his arm, and slowly proceeded down the hall.

Jessie sat at the kitchen table, her forehead cradled in her hands, her shoulders convulsing slightly with tears. He knew he was making a mistake, but he sat by her side regardless, tapping her shoulder lightly. She looked up, and upon seeing James immediately frowned deeply. "What?" she asked bitterly. James picked up her hand from the black envelope on the table, opened it, and gently pressed the two minimized Pokeballs into her palms. Jessie shook her head, tears sliding silently down her cheeks. "Don't you dare do this to me James, don't even try this," she grumbled. James scowled at her and opened his notebook to a clean page, beginning to write as soon as it was there.

Jessie's grimace grew deeper as she read as fast as James could write. "Jessie, I need someone I can trust to look after Victreebell and Weezing. I trust you more than anyone in the world. I can't take care of them anymore, they wouldn't understand. I can't even use them to battle so I give them both to you. I hope they'll be of some help when you get transferred to a new team," he wrote, his expression sour with despair. Jessie slammed her fist down on the table, leaving the Pokeballs there as she swept the letter from Giovanni up and thrust it in James' face. "You might as well keep your god damn Pokemon! I might as well throw Arbok and Lickitung down the gutter! I can't even use them anymore!" she yelled beginning to sob.

James' expression changed from sorrow, to confusion, to utter infuriation as he carefully read the hand written script. After completing, he roughly ripped the letter in two, flinging it to the ground, glaring at Jessie. "Why?" he roughly scribbled on the page. "Because you're a god damn invalid now," Jessie hissed mockingly. James picked up his Pokemon, his gaze never leaving Jessie's. Tacit hatred passed between them as they stared in enmity, each placing full blame for the downfall of their lives on the other. "Get out of here, I can't deal with you now," Jessie finally snapped, her teeth clenched tightly. James' grimace deepened as he tearfully wrote one last message before storming out of the room. "At least you can answer."

Jessie tore the page out of the notebook, crumpling it angrily and tossed it to the wastebasket, and missed. She folded her arms across each other and laid her forehead on them, rocking it gently from side to side. "My life is ruined...Over gone and ruined," she moaned. "Yeah, well maybe ya should tink of James fer once," she looked to the ground from whence she had heard Meowth's voice. "What about him?" she asked bitterly, "it's all his fault anyway." Meowth smiled coyly. "What about da man you was falling in love wid? Da bravest person in da world? Giovanni's fault? Hmmm?" he asked. "God I don't know who to blame anymore," Jessie replied through her sobs. "Did it ever occur to ya maybe dat's because dere is no one to blame?" Jessie was silent after this. "Tink about dat," Meowth mused and sauntered off into the main room of the small house, leaving Jessie to think.

She wiped the tears from her cheeks and sighed. "I give up James, you

win, and just as I was about to tell you how much I cared-No, how much I loved you, this had to happen. This can never be righted, I hate you now. Meowth's wrong, it is your fault. You ruined my life along with your own and for that you must be despised," she whispered through clenched teeth, unaware that James had heard most of her conversation with herself. "I hate you too, Jessica, and I know how much you hate your full name! You've made my life after my handicap a living hell, when you should have stuck by me! I thought you were my best friend, but now I know for sure I was wrong!" he screamed in his mind, tears sliding silently down his cheeks.

He closed his eyes remorsefully and closed his door, a loud clap of thunder drowning out the loud slam. He pressed his back against the door, burying his face in his hands as he slowly slid down to the ground, sobbing the whole way. Through his despair an image came to mind, representative of sorrow, and betrayal, of a soul who did not know which way to turn, and he decided to draw it. Drawing the Growlithe before did something for him, relieved some of the stress he had pent inside of him, the stress he could not express through speech as one normally would. He knew of some pencils, but those were not adequate enough for such a gorgeous image he had in his mind.

He managed to find some thick paper, quite a bit larger than a normal sheet, but was left without sufficient drawing utensils. He frowned, setting his prized canvas aside and put a hand to his forehead in thought. He brightened briefly as inspiration struck, and dashed to the closet. He threw it open with a particularly large crash and dove in zestfully, throwing his belongings behind him. After he finally reached the carpet at the bottom, he stopped, his search fruitless, and sighed in defeat. James wiped his burning eyes with the back of his hand, standing, but only to fall forward onto his stomach as the back of his head collided harshly with a wooden shelf. He silently cried out in pain and put his hand tenderly to the offending area, his entire skull, particularly the healing wound, beginning to ache.

James rolled over onto his back, eyes shut hard, and rested on the soft warm carpet. He relaxed, however, as the pain finally began to subside. "This is going to get annoying," he thought gently sitting up. The shelf creaked, and James' eyes snapped open as he felt something plummet to land in his lap. He looked down and almost smiled with delight at the ancient and worn shoebox, taped shut, that now rested on his thighs. The yellowed plastic succumbed easily to his finger, and he gently lifted the lid, revealing a secret stash of cash ironically saved for a rainy day. He snatched a few bills and tossed them on the small table next to his bed, yawning widely. As he changed into his nightclothes, James promised himself he would go to the art supply store in town and buy himself some quality charcoal pencils.

James bent down to shut the light off to rest, but stopped as his gaze fell upon an old photo in a simple metal frame by his bed. He picked it up and grimaced at the memories flooding back into his head. It was of Team Rocket united, when both he and Jessie had decided to throw a surprise birthday party for Meowth. She had made up the date, as Meowth did not know the actual date of his birth, but true to his friend's wishes, he celebrated every year on April third. He had a comical cone shaped paper hat on in the photo with bright colored decorations on it, as well as strewn around their small house. Jessie and James had donned the embarrassing attire regardless

of their own vanity, and the day had been a success. Though Jessie and James had been friends since school, that was the first year they had been united with the feline Pokemon as Team Rocket. James opened the single drawer below the tabletop and roughly toppled the photo into it, slamming it shut afterwards.

James could not deal with the happy memories surrounding it. The one person he felt he could trust anything with, tell anything to, and do anything with, had deserted him exactly when he needed her the most. He sighed loudly as he pulled back his bedding, and gingerly slipped under them, grateful for something familiar once again. He slid his eyes shut, gently adjusting his bandages one last time before turning over to a more comfortable position. "I'm really going to miss her," he thought and drifted off into a numb, dreamless sleep.

Jessie lay in her bed, unlike James, unable to sleep. Thoughts crossed her mind that she had never imagined would even take place there, thoughts she would punish herself for later in life. "I shouldn't be so cruel to him," she whispered to herself, "it really isn't his fault he got shot. And Meowth's right, he is the bravest person I know, but he's changed so much. I hate him for sacrificing himself for me, and being so warped by an accident. I hate him for not even trying to overcome it, he just left me." She turned over onto her side, her face twisted in confusion, pain, and hatred. "I don't know what to do anymore." She closed her eyes and also fell asleep after yelling at herself for convincing herself she hated James. She knew in her heart it was true, but her conscious mind would not allow herself to admit she loathed her best friend since she had been a child. "I never even told him when my mom died."

The next morning, James awoke to the bright sunlight he was accustomed to, along with the song of a Nightingale outside his window. "Must have a nest in my tree," he thought to himself as he stretched. His hand found the money sitting on his dresser and he sat up suddenly, remembering what he had set out to do. He set it back down, sliding carefully out of bed as not to aggravate his skull, and pulled open the bottom drawer. He sifted the contents until he located his favorite pair of simple blue jeans, and a black shirt with a blue stripe across the chest.

James shed his nightclothes, changing quickly and shoved his cash into the right pocket. Light from James' door shed a faint ray on the ancient carpet of the hall as he opened it slightly. The house was still quiet and still, indicating no one but him was awake and active. Taking the opportunity, he deftly slid his thin frame into the hall and stole to the kitchen.

The keys to the jeep glinted in the early morning sunlight from their place on the table just in front of the door, and James did not even pause as he picked them up on his way through to the vehicle. He unlocked it and started the engine as soon as he was comfortable in the driver's seat. Gravel crunched under the worn tires as James eased the jeep into the street and picked up speed towards town.

Jessie awoke that morning due to an unfamiliar weight on her stomach. She rolled over, in an attempt to rid herself of it, groaning in complaint and heard a loud thud accompanied by an enraged yowl. "Jessie!" Her azure eyes were instantly open at the familiar voice and Meowth leapt indignantly back onto her bed. "I'm sorry," she

mumbled groggily. "Apologize lata, James is gone!" he replied, his fur standing on end with rage and worry.

Jessie sat bolt upright in bed at this news. "He's what?!" she cried. "He ain't in da house, da jeep and da keys is gone too!" Meowth repeated. "Damn," Jessie muttered sliding out of bed. "What are ya gonna do?" Meowth asked following her to her closet. "Nothing," she spat bitterly, taking out an outfit for the day. "But Jessie! He can't talk! Who knows what's gonna happen!" Meowth screamed balefully. "I don't care, if he comes back, okay, if he doesn't, that's fine too," she paused, as if remembering something and shut her closet roughly. "I'm going to go work in the yard, it needs tending to, if you'll excuse me," Jessie said brushing past the feline, old clothes draped over her arm. Meowth watched remorsefully as she stiffly went through the motions of walking down the hall, and entering the bathroom, glaring at him one last time before shutting the door. "Someday you'll realize how much ya still love him," he thought to himself, and leapt to the windowsill for a nap in the early rays of the platinum sun.

James pressed through the doors of the local art supply store briskly, grimly surveying the vast rows of paints, canvases, charcoals, frames, and everything else he could think of that one used for a project such as his. He sighed and shrugged, looking forward to the task and located the aisle he sought. He slowly paced down the row, reading the labels on the varied boxes of brilliantly colored charcoal pencils. All claimed to have the greatest performance, but James knew better. He had been instructed in art as a child, and knew that charcoal was charcoal, it was only a matter of preference.

He found the brand that he had used in the past, and grimaced at the price. It was more than he had intended to spend, and he set them back down with a sudden inspiration. "Why have a charcoal drawing when I can have a work of art?" he thought, heading for the high quality oil paints a few aisles down, but not before selecting a small package of plain black charcoal to begin the basic drawing of the painting he could see vividly in his mind.

James smiled vaguely, undetectable except by him, as he skimmed over the tubes resting in their respective racks. He read the color names, selecting the ones he wanted and tossing them into his basket with a vigor he had not felt since the accident. The mere thought of creating something as beautiful as in his head cheering his infinitely dulled spirits slightly. He ignored the other artisans staring at him and looking away as if he embarrassed them, and counted the number of tubes, paint brushes, and charcoal pencils, and numerous other supplies and added the amount in his head.

Suddenly realizing he had spent much more than he intended too, he moved to reduce the price by deducting a few colors. His hand stopped, unable to deprive his planned painting of any richness it would contain, and James decided to spend all that he had brought. The last remaining money was spent on a beautiful canvas, only the best for his first dapple in the world of art. James placed the canvas under his arm, and precariously carried the basket in his other hand as he stumbled his way to the cashier.

The young girl about his age greeted him warmly, smiling broadly as he dumped the paint tubes out next to her. "Planning a painting are



we?" she asked. James opened his mouth to speak, as was suddenly aware of the bandages still wrapped tightly around his head, and his lost speech. Suddenly missing the sound of his own voice, he nodded numbly. "What of?" the girl continued sliding the paints painfully slowly across the scanner. James shrugged in response. "You know you have the most striking green eyes I think I've ever seen? They're gorgeous!" she continued. James rolled his aforementioned "striking green eyes" and nodded, silently yet again. "Dude, are you one of those schizophrenic weirdo artists who, like, don't talk?" she asked raising one eyebrow.

James took the bags and the canvas, handing her the money, and grinning. He nodded the affirmative and exited the store, much to the horror of the cashier who cursed herself for flirting with him, chuckling silently to himself. He smiled until he got to the parking lot, but his face twisted in an indescribable expression as he loaded his supplies into the back of the jeep, an expression of pure horror, that looked as if it pained him to breathe, to even think. What was that he had just done? He opened the jeep's door slowly and climbed in, not quite sure exactly what was controlling his actions, and started the engine. "My god, I'm going to be this way the rest of my life," he moaned in his mind as he numbly drove home.

Meowth cried out in joy as his acute hearing picked up the sound of the familiar car rolling into the driveway, and leapt from his nap site. The feline dashed out the front door, yelling James' name and met him halfway. "James! Oh god where were ya? I've been worried sick!" he cried, "and...And so has Jessie." He added as an afterthought. James patted Meowth affectionately on the head, hefted his bags and proceeded directly to his room. "Art supply outlet? What was he doin' dere?" Meowth wondered aloud, and sauntered off to find a suitable bed of flowers for his afternoon nap.

James peered cautiously down the hall to ensure Jessie was not there, and pressed his back against the wall, inching toward his room slowly. He heard the door to the back door fling open with a loud crash of the screen and Jessie's angered shouts. "Meowth! I try to keep my flowers nice and you have to sleep in them?" "Hey! Ya do such a good job, dey's da comfiest place in da house! Next to yer bed of course!" "My bed!" He snickered silently at the small, yet comical argument and slipped soundlessly into his room.

He set his items on the ground and locked the door, as not to be disturbed. The thought of lunch crossed his mind briefly, but he decided he really was not in the mood to eat and opened his closet. Stashed in the back, was an ancient easel he had used during his art training under the dreaded Jessibelle. He shuddered at the old memories, and slid it carefully out into the center of the room, nearest his wide window. He peered through the blinds out into the back yard, his brow furrowing at the sight of Jessie, kneeling in the dirt, tending to her small bed of brightly colored flowers. She looked forlorn, as James had noticed every time she came to see him the several months he had spent in the hospital.

Jessie had a blue aura of sadness that always seemed to follow her, James noticed, and he closed the plastic strips with a soft rustle and flipped on every light in his room. He sighed. "Nothing's ever going to be the same," he mouthed the words, but only a faint scratching sound came from his lips and he winced in pain. His paralyzed vocal cords protested any kind of abuse of therapy he tried

on them. The doctors in the hospital had tried some simple words, but even attempting them seared at the inside of his throat like hot needles, and he had eventually flatly refused. They gave up on him then, and he fell into an even more bitter state of being.

James shook his head to clear the awful memories and set his canvas onto the easel. He unwrapped his charcoal pencils, and drew the one that looked the most solid from the center of the row. He took a deep breath and gently set the end on the canvas. "And so begins an experiment," he thought as he moved the charcoal in a wide arc downwards. He coiled it gently and elegantly at the end and brought his hand back up, filling in a rough sketch of a face beneath flowing hair.

James stuck his tongue out of one side his mouth and bit it gently in concentration. A battle. The background of the painting would be a battle, their heroic angel fallen in the midst, the cruelest of fates. The painting would represent futility, and hopelessness, sadness, and hurt. Pain was the central element, as well as all the things in it, all feelings incorporated were all emotions James knew well.

He crafted a thin young woman, kneeling, with her hands at the arrow through her abdomen. Her eyes were shut peacefully as the painting caught her in the middle of falling to the bloodied battleground to die a noble death. Her tattered and dirty wings trailed a line of mangled feathers, and her face was twisted in pain and a solemn longing, as if she loved someone she could never be with, and was now leaving the mortal realm, never to see him again. James nodded approvingly. This was how he felt, the same pain, the same loss as in his drawing, but as he looked closer, he gasped and clasped a blacked and dusty hand to his mouth in a silent shriek. The angel in his painting, intended to be just a young woman, had become Jessie.

### 3. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Chapter Three

#### Chapter Three

James panicked, taking a cloth and bringing it hastily to the drawing's face, but paused, remembering Jessie in the garden, that sad look that always followed her, and realized why he had subconsciously drawn her. He let the cloth drop to the floor, and decided the drawing was gorgeous, and his angel would stay Jessie. She had been deeply hurt as well from the accident, and James could clearly see it now. Though she had tried to be the person she was before he had been shot, James knew her too well to believe her false happiness and hope.

James made a few improvements to the charcoal outline and began the tedious task of preparing the paints. He worked the rest of the day, and still, only got a few brush strokes onto the canvas before he heard a sharp knock at his door. "James? Meowth told me you were in here all day, you okay?" he recognized Jessie's voice, and the "Meowth-told-me-to-ask-so-I'm-going-to-even-though-I-really-don't-want-to-or-care" tone. He dropped the paintbrush he was holding, coated in a shade of red exactly matching Jessie's hair in terror and lifted the canvas from the easel.

James' eyes darted about the room, looking for a suitable place to conceal his secret from Jessie. "If she finds out about this I'm so screwed!" he thought to himself, but grinned slyly as he noted the long bedspread dangling just over the floor. He dove forward, landing on his knees and gently slid the painting under his bed. The easel and paints he stashed haphazardly in his closet, after closing the tubes with whatever lid he could find and unlocked his door.

James opened it and Jessie stared coldly into his eyes, her animosity hidden guilefully beneath an appropriately concerned expression. "You okay?" she asked again. James nodded. "You didn't eat any lunch, aren't you hungry?" she asked. James shook his head. Jessie frowned at him and turned slowly over her shoulder. "Well, Meowth and I are going into town for dinner, you can stay here if you want, there's bound to be something in the fridge, see ya later," she said and walked down the hall.

James poked his tongue out at her and slipped back into his room, locking the door behind him, and stopped at the crimson stain on his carpet. He picked up the paintbrush, scowling. "Shoot, that was the wrong red," he thought, having just seen Jessie's hair, and moved to retrieve his canvas. He winced as he bent to pick it up, noting a faint streak of red paint on his bedspread. His hand finally found it, and he gently pulled it from its hiding spot.

James sighed in relief to find the paint strokes he had started were relatively unscathed, and he set the canvas on his bed to drag out his easel and paints. He worked until he heard the front door open, and Jessie and Meowth return, arguing loudly over something. He cursed silently and stashed his supplies in the hiding places he had determined earlier that day. Deciding he did not want to deal with Jessie or Meowth any longer that day, he unlocked his door appropriately and slipped into bed.

True to his suspicions, his door opened slightly shortly after. Jessie peered through quietly, noting that his lights were off, and sighed, whispering to Meowth. "He's asleep, let's leave him alone," she said. Meowth nodded, staying at the door, watching his friend carefully. "James is up ta somthin', and I don't like it," he muttered quietly and closed the door behind him as he left. "Great, one these days one of them is going to find my painting, I guess I'll have to work at night," James thought, and so began the odd schedule of completing his work of art.

James moved from working during the day, and sleeping at night, to doing exactly the opposite. He set his alarm to go off nightly at midnight, when he would start his work, and paint until he grew weary. Then he slept, often until late hours of the day. Jessie and Meowth rarely saw him, as even when he was awake, he kept mostly to himself. James felt that they were no longer his friends, that they no longer cared, and neither did he, but there would come a day where his life as he knew it then, lived in depression and angst, would change completely.

James took out his painting that night, and smiled warmly. It was nearly finished. He sighed and set it on the easel, knowing he would most likely complete it before morning, and dipped a tiny paintbrush gingerly into a deep crimson. He brought it to the arrow through Jessie's stomach, trailing the blood from it, striking against her

white garb. He smiled again, the fact that he only smiled now when he was painting suddenly coming to mind, and rinsed the bloody color from the brush.

Unbeknownst to James, Meowth stood outside his window, attempting to catch even so much as a glimpse of what he had been doing for so long in there at night. His acute hearing picked up the sound of the door being opened and James' slowly dimming footsteps as they went down the silent hall. Seizing the opportunity, the feline crept back into the house, furtively pressing his back against the wall and shuffling to James' room.

He had left the door open slightly, and it required minimal effort on Meowth's part to open, and he crouched on all four paws to enter. As his eyes adjusted to the dim light, they searched, and soon found themselves upon the painting. His jaw dropped as he scrutinized it, nearly not believing what he saw and he stood back up on his hind legs, walking closer. "I...It's Jessie," he whispered in awe. He heard the door open behind him and he whirled around, his expression changing to one of terror. James' mirrored his as he returned to find the cat looking at his painting.

Meowth watched the tears spring to his eyes as he shuffled in a pile of paper full of small drawings on his desk for anything to write on and explain himself, but Meowth leapt onto the surface, upsetting all that rested there and stopping James. He let a few tears slide down his cheeks before wiping them away with his hand. "Ya don't need ta explain James, but where on earth did ya get dat?" he asked in bewilderment. James found a pencil, wrote an answer and showed it to the feline. "I painted it." Meowth's eyes widened as he glanced back to the beautiful painting again. "You? You did dat?" he asked. James nodded solemnly and took a seat at the edge of his bed, finally locating the notebook he normally used. "I'm sorry," he wrote. Meowth smiled and batted the book from his hands. "James, don't feel ashamed. It's da most gorgeous ting I've seen in a while, next ta you coming back ta me," he said climbing into his lap and wrapping his arms around James' neck.

James did not know at the time what Meowth meant, but he sobbed just as hard as his old friend as he held the Pokemon close, grateful for his friendship. Meowth turned and smiled at the now completed painting. "Ya know, it's beautiful, but it's missin' somthin," he mused. James scrutinized the scene, searching for any negative space, or flaws, but only when he found none, did he understand what Meowth meant.

James put the cat down on the bed, and stood, moving to his canvas. He picked up the miniscule brush he had used earlier for the blood in his painting and, dipped it in black paint instead. He turned over his should and smiled, which brought more tears. The first time Meowth had seen a genuine smile from James overjoyed him. He turned back to his painting and gingerly and carefully brushed "James LeBlanc" into the bottom right corner in longhand. "Dere ya go! Any great artist signs his works," Meowth said curling into a small ball at the end of James' bed. He put the brush back into the glass of water and sat down, yawning. He glanced about to ensure that no tubes were open and drying or brush bristles fusing together with paint and nodded approvingly. He swung his legs up onto the bed inching his head up to meet the pillow and sighed contentedly.

He closed his eyes, but one was forced open as he felt Meowth walk across his side. "Need some company tonight?" he asked. James smiled and pulled him down in front of his stomach. "I missed you pal," Meowth said and purred lightly, closing his eyes and nuzzling closer to his friend, and they both fell asleep, and for the first time in months, James felt something odd. While he had drifted off, his lips had been curled into yet another genuine smile, as he finally felt a moment of true happiness.

Jessie woke the next morning in her typical manner, forcing herself out of bed swearing she should just stay there. To her, life seemed to get worse every day, she hardly ever saw James any longer, and it had been weeks since he had even written a note to her. It was as if he was really dead. She contemplated crying as she dressed, but decided that her tears were no longer over him, but for her life. She felt dead, like part of her had been locked away, waiting for something that would never come, and one does not cry at their own death.

She walked numbly to the kitchen and gasped in shock to find James and Meowth already sitting at the table. She raised an eyebrow as she watched them. Meowth grasped at his stomach and dramatically fell to one side, then sat up laughing. James smiled at this, chuckling silently as well, and raised a steaming mug to his lips. Jessie could not help but notice how he looked. When she had first brought him home, he had been thin, too thin, and his eyes had no life behind them. His whole persona had been changed, and even now this was the first time she had seen him smile in months. Yet as she gazed at him, his emerald eyes sparkled with vitality, and he had regained the body had once had. His face practically glowed with the same health and lust for life he had once possessed.

He glanced up and upon seeing her, much to her astonishment, smiled warmly. He nudged a second mug her direction and she sat next to him, taking it. Meowth and James met eyes furtively, and grinned, then turned to Jessie. "Mornin' Jess!" Meowth called. She sipped the coffee James had prepared for her and set the mug on the table decisively. "Okay, I want to know what the hell happened," she said harshly. James looked hurt and looked for anything to write on and with. "What do ya mean?" Meowth asked confused. "You two were just as depressed as I am, and now we're all chipper as Pikachu, what the hell happened that I don't know about?!" she repeated, her voice laced with tears.

James tapped her on the shoulder and shoved a piece of paper into her hand. She let tears fall as she read it. "Jessie, nothing happened, I've just decided to move on with my life, I've got a new outlook on things, and I'm happier because of it. I think you need to move on too." She wailed in anguish, crumpling the note and throwing it to the table. "God! I'm so sick of this!" she screamed and fled the kitchen, toppling her chair on the way out. "Jessie! Don't!" Meowth called and made a move to follow her. James held a hand out to him, shaking his head, and followed Jessie.

She pressed her back against her door, which she had just slammed shut, sobbing as she gently lowered herself to the ground. She had been used to depression, knowing that everyone in their home felt the same way. She knew she could never recover from the tragedy, and the concept that James, the one who really had been hurt, had moved on and not her, caused her to realize that she would never be the same.

Fate has chosen her for an experiment and it had been a total failure.

Jessie jumped at the light knock on her door, and inched over away from its path. "Go away!" she hissed, knowing James had followed her, and that he would not go away. He opened the door, and found her on the floor, casting a soft smile down at her. "God could I hate you more? Get out of here!" she screamed through tears. James knelt in front of her, stroking a cheekbone tenderly until she looked him in the eye.

His were full of life, and vitality, the same eyes Jessie had fallen in love with so long ago. Though his mouth could not tell her, they gave her his message of hope, that it was never too late, and she could be saved. She did not have to be this bitter and resentful, and that he would always be there for her. Jessie's eyes told a different story, one of futility, of a soul that had lost its other half, and even though it appeared to have returned, she knew that James was very different. James knew he was the same person inside now, he had resolved his conflicts through his artworks, and even had another painting in mind.

The differences in opinion about James drove the stake into the heart of their old friendship even deeper, threatening to break it forever, never to be repaired. James felt tears gather in his own eyes as Jessie gritted her teeth and looked away from him, the same hate for him burning brighter than ever in her eyes. He sobbed silently, wrapping his arms around her neck and holding her close. She cried harder, feeling James' shoulders convulse as she returned the embrace, and hearing nothing from his throat. "Just...Just leave me alone," she sobbed, burying her face into his neck. "Please go, I can't take this much longer," she said, running a hand through his now freed, and silky blue hair. He no longer wore the bandages, and the wound had sealed neatly, leaving an undetectable scar.

James backed away and brushed a stray hair away from Jessie's face and stood, moving to the door. Jessie curled into a smaller ball, putting her face into her hands to continue to sob. She did not even look up as James left her alone to drown herself in her own sorrows.

No one spoke for the rest of that day except Meowth and James. They retreated to James' room to put any additional touches on his painting, and Jessie, remained to think. She contemplated the cruel hand fate had dealt her, and why she was so cruel to the person she still cared about most in the world. "I don't hate him," she muttered later that evening as she sat in front of her mirror. Jessie ran her broad brush through her unkempt red hair and sighed. "I don't hate him at all, and...And I never did. I still love him more than anything." She looked away from her disheveled appearance and closed her eyes to ward off tears. "I hate myself," she groaned, "and I'm hurting James because of it, now I have to tell him the truth."

Jessie stood gingerly, and stiffly made her way to James' room, pausing at the door, to hear Meowth speak to him soothingly. "Aw c'mon James! It ain't your fault! Jessie's just...Real confused right now, just work on finishin' dat so yous can it get it displayed somewheres!" Jessie raised an eyebrow, but shrugged opening the door. "James, I feel terrible and I really just need to-" she stopped as

her eyes came to rest on both James and Meowth standing in front of a painting.

The art was of a battle, and a fierce looking one at that, in the background, but the main focus was an extraordinarily familiar angel, falling in death in the foreground. James stepped aside, all color visibly draining from his face as he sat heavily down on the bed, cradling his forehead in his hands. "James you...You painted this," Jessie whispered gazing at herself in the painting. She gasped in pure joy, a hand coming to her mouth and tears gathering in her eyes as the full meaning of it struck her.

Ever since James had been a child, he had not been permitted to live his life as he chose. That and many other things were the sole reasons why he had run away, and joined Team Rocket. It had been a struggle, but before the accident, his real personality had begun to shine through. Though Jessie had known what it was all along, she had fallen in love with the James that expressed himself fully, unabashed. With his loss of speech, so came a loss of communication, and expression, but had found it again through art.

His painting contained the one element that loses many artist's acclaim, emotion. The work thrived with it, as if James had poured his own being into a few oil colors on a canvas. "James when did you do this?" Jessie asked. He looked away, ashamed, and scribbled something into the notebook he already held in his lap from speaking with Meowth. Jessie read it, and smiled warmly at him. "Every night at midnight, I'd wake up and work until morning." Jessie had been wrong about James. He was not the fragile bird robbed of its essence as she had once thought. Her Nightingale still sang, but he sang at midnight, when no one could hear his song but himself.

Jessie closed her eyes and sat next to James, wrapping her arms around him lovingly. He smiled and returned the embrace, resting his chin on her shoulder. She drew in a deep breath and brought her mouth to his ear. "I love you James, more than anything in the world," Jessie whispered. He had come back to her, and in those few beautiful words, James felt Jessie return, and the dagger driven through their hearts was removed. He pulled away, smiling broadly and as their eyes met, and mouthed the words, "I love you too," to her. "Oh James," Jessie whispered as he gently lifted her chin for her lips to meet his.

Meowth watched as they kissed, grinning in delight. The love had been there all along, but it had taken the tragedy to make them realize how much they needed each other. He smiled as the kiss became more passionate and ducked out the open window. "Dey'll probably be wantin' dier privacy," he mused and shut the glass panel securely behind him, leaping joyously into the yard to chase the flying points of light, oblivious to the joyous song of a Nightingale trilling in the depths of the night blackened trees.

Jessie held James closer to her, feeling his familiar warmth against her own, and his relieved breathing on her neck. "I'm so sorry James, I've hurt you so badly, and I swear you are the best thing that's ever happened to me, I forgot that I loved you, and I hated myself for that. I never hated you, and I never hated myself, I hated my mind because I lost sight of what really mattered," she explained, feeling James' lips brush her neck. "You're my other half, I'm nothing without you, and when I thought I had lost that, I lost

myself," she whispered as she felt the kisses continue along her chin, and finally on her lips again.

She smiled as she kissed him back as passionately as she could, with more love and emotion than she had ever shown anyone, and didn't protest when James' hands moved to her back and her thin nightshirt, lifting it gently. She welcomed it, but it only reached her shoulders before she felt James back away suddenly, releasing his hold on her and looking to the side, his cheeks crimson with embarrassment.

He shook his head as if to punish himself, but looked back at Jessie as she caressed his face lovingly and gingerly. "Yes James, I trust you and I love you, I trust you with everything, my heart, my mind, my soul, and my body," she said lying on her back, bringing James with her. She pulled him close, her chin resting on his shoulder and her lips close to his ear. "Make love to me James, make me happier than I've ever been in my life," she whispered.

James let his tears of joy fall as Jessie slid his shirt adoringly over his head, and he did the same for her. He cried as their souls and bodies became one, living the blissful moments slowly, treasuring the love he had found in the one person he knew he was meant to be with. Making love to Jessie was something he had often dared to dream about, but never imagined would happen until he was positive he could feel her tender touch, and her loving, passionate lips upon his. The tears of joy ran harder as the night progressed, until at last, it was over, and Jessie fell asleep in the comfort of his arms.

James lay awake only a short time after Jessie drifted off to sleep, savoring the feeling what they had done, and the feeling of her in his arms. He buried his face into her now loose and sweet smelling hair, smiling. "I'll love and cherish you forever Jessie," he whispered, the biting pain of speaking searing his throat with the slurred and near undecipherable words, "why should good things like that be around for so long, and then die in an instant? I'll make it last forever, I never want it to end."

Jessie awoke the next morning before James with a smile on her lips. She closed her eyes happily as she felt herself still in his arms, and his soft rhythmic breathing behind her. "God, he has to be the most beautiful man on earth," she thought to herself, only then realizing he had cried with joy the previous night. He looked innocent while he slept, as if nothing in the world were amiss and everything was as beautiful, and full of passion as their love the night of latter had been, and Jessie smiled at what she finally had, that had in reality been at her side all along. "I'll always love you James, I'll never leave you, and I'll never give up on you like that again," she whispered as he began to stir.

She turned to face him, kissing his forehead gently as he opened her favorite eyes in the world, inches from hers. "I never thought I'd be so happy waking up next to you," she said as James kissed her lightly on the lips. Jessie put a hand behind his head, smiling at the silkiness of his blue-lavender hair and continued the kiss he had started.

It was broken rudely however, by a sharp rap at the door. "Hey James! It's late! Getup!" they rolled their eyes at Meowth who had officially killed their first romantic morning with each other and sat up. Jessie located her clothing and quickly pulled it back on,



handing James his shirt which had gotten in with her pile. He donned it gratefully and smiled as he realized Jessie was blushing slightly. "Hey, I smell something good! Think Meowth cooked for us?" she asked turning to James. He shrugged as they exited James' room, and headed into the kitchen.

Meowth stood at the table, grinning proudly at the two plates of French toast sitting in waiting for them at the table. "Meowth thought youse two needed a nice mornin!" he said fervently. James chuckled as he realized what he meant and sat across the table from Jessie. "Well thank you Meowth, that was a rare step out of character, but I appreciate it," Jessie said, already throwing herself vivaciously into her breakfast. "Well I gots one ting ta say, next time ya wanna sleep wid James, I suggest keeping it down, da neighbors mighta heard!" he said smugly.

James stifled a fit of laughter as both he and Jessie's face turned a mutual crimson and their eyes met. Jessie smirked and put a hand over her mouth, unable to contain her laughter and both she and James shared another precious moment together.

After breakfast was finished, James led Jessie back to his room, snatching his notebook from his nightstand. "I have another idea for a painting," he wrote, "if you'll do it." He smiled sheepishly at her as she nodded in agreement and began the outline on the pad of paper for his newest work of art.

Meowth watched them together, smiling in joy as Jessie reclined casually on the bed, posed with her hands behind her head, staring at the ceiling with a wistful, yet hopeful expression. Her body was covered in a few key places with a soft satiny material Meowth noticed, but that was all, and she had left her hair down from the night before, laced with flowers James had picked himself. "James, lets see ya bring your angel to life," he whispered.

#### 4. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Chapter 4

#### Chapter 4

The months passed and James finished the painting of Jessie, and she held him tightly as he signed his name at the bottom corner. "Another masterpiece," she whispered kissing his cheek lovingly. "I...I never would have done it if you hadn't been so willing," James replied. Jessie smiled at hearing his voice again, wrapping her arms around him. "That's music to my ears James," she said at his quiet, but verbal response.

Since the fateful night he had told Jessie he loved her, he had pursued regaining his speech with vitality, and most of it had returned, he spoke more slowly now, and some words and syllables he still had difficulty back, but simply hearing her James' voice once again was the best thing Jessie could ever have hoped for. "James James! Da letta! It came!" Jessie gripped James' shoulder in anticipation as Meowth bounded into the bedroom waving a small white envelope. James swallowed hard, gathering air to speak and held out his paint-covered hand. "Well don't just stand there, give to me!" he said anxiously, and snatched it from the cat's claws.

James tensed as he slid his finger under the seal, and tore the paper open, gripping the folded letter apprehensively. "Go on James, what's the worst that could happen?" Jessie assured him as he unfolded the elegant white paper and read the script somberly. "T...They..." he stuttered dropping the letter in utter disbelief. "Aw damn. I'm sorry James, you can't expect to be accepted the first time," she said consoling him.

He turned and looked at her practically, a devious smirk coiling the corner of his mouth. "Actually, I can! They accepted me Jess! They're going to display my painting!" he cried wrapping his arms around her lovingly. "They did? They are? James that's wonderful! When are they doing it?" she asked. James kissed her swiftly on the nose and smiled. "Next weekend, they're having a big party and unveiling a few new paintings, mine included! Jessie this is my dream come true! I'm somebody!" he said his emerald eyes sparkling.

Jessie gazed at them, smiling at him. His eyes were quite possibly the most beautiful she had ever seen, and they gazed with such love and adoration at no one but her, and she treasured it. "I'm so happy for you, and maybe when you're a famous artist, kids will be learning about you in school, great artists to be will study your technique, but no one will duplicate it and you wanna know why?" she asked resting her forehead against James'. "Why?" he asked closing his eyes. "Because no one puts such love into their paintings, no one on earth is better at it than you, you're the best artist in the world James," Jessie assured him.

James pressed his lips against Jessie's, kissing her lovingly. "It's only because I think about how much I love you when I paint," he answered. "I love you too James," Jessie said. "What do you say we, uh, ditch the furball for tonight and have a nice candlelight dinner to celebrate, just the two of us?" James suggested, running a hand through Jessie's styled hair. "Sounds great to me James, I'll go get ready," she said kissing him quickly before heading to her room to change. "So, ditchin me eh?" Meowth piped up angrily. James grinned smugly. "I don't want you there for a reason, and you'll find out later, now if you'll excuse me, I have a date," he said brushing past the feline into the bathroom. "Hmph! I swear, love does funny things ta peoples minds," Meowth mused and sauntered to the kitchen to fix himself a tuna melt for dinner.

@---

James sipped his glass of water, nervously fingering the slight bulge in his left pocket, waiting for the dessert he had ordered for he and Jessie to share to arrive. "Oh James, this is the best restaurant I've been to in forever! Thanks so much for taking me!" she piped cheerfully as a lavish looking slice of white cake was set between them. James smiled at it, the object reflecting exactly what he was thinking about. "Welcome Jess, anything for you!" he replied happily.

Jessie smiled at him using her twice shortened nickname. It just seemed so incredibly familiar and affectionate, and she liked it. James was a true gentleman at the meal's end, picking up the check, and offering a walk in the park just outside of town. "I'd love to James," Jessie replied taking the arm he offered to her.

He led her to a spot he'd picked out a few days beforehand and stopped, staring at the small lake at the center of the park. The bright full moon reflected off it dashing, illuminating both his and Jessie's face with silver light, making them both look immortal. He sat on a small flat rock, still warm from the day's heat, bringing Jessie with him, his arm draped affectionately about her shoulders.

He fingered his pocket yet again and drew in a deep breath. "Jessie, there's something I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now," he said slowly. "Go ahead James, just don't strain your voice," Jessie said as James tenderly took her hands into his. "Jessie, I love you more than anything, I'd jump from the highest building in the world if I thought it would make you as happy as you've made me," he said. "James, you practically saved my life, and loved me more than I've ever felt, except from my mom, and I always loved you," Jessie promised him, "and I always will." James smiled. "Which brings me to my point, Jessie, I've been so afraid to ask, because I know how much you want to be happy, and I didn't know if I could, but now that I know for sure, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to be a part of you Jessie, I want to take your places and show you things, I want to be your best friend, your lover, and the other half of your soul, but to do that," he paused, reaching for his back pocket, and drew a small black object from it, "I want to be your husband too. Marry me Jessie, complete my soul."

Jessie took the box and opened it, tears of joy already gathering in her eyes as she gazed at the ring. It was a perfect clear diamond in the shape of a just as perfect white rose, the stem forming the band. James removed it, and lovingly slid it onto her finger, kissing the back of her hand lightly. "Yes James, I will marry you," she replied embracing him.

They cried together, cried for the love they thought they would never find, the love they thought dead, but found still alive, yet dormant in each other. They knew that they had completed their mutual shattered souls, brought about by hardships and sorrow through most of their lives, and it took the same kind of person to empathize and sympathize with their situations. They knew also, that they would be eternally happy, James had finally found something that truly made him happy, and if her James was happy, Jessie was too.

James' painting was displayed just a few short days after, and it gained the acclaim of many of the great artists who had come to the event at the museum James had chosen with Jessie's help. Jessie and James stared at it lovingly, their fingers intertwined, listening to the conversations that sprung up around it. "Well, I think it's a comment on society today, see how this angel is dying in the front? It symbolizes morals and how they've been killed too!" "No that can't be it! Who chooses an angel for morals? It's obviously the history of the world!" "You're insane." "No no really! Look, it shows how the people have gone from angels, to these devils in the back!" "Preposterous!" The two men continued their conversation as James smirked.

Only he and Jessie knew the true meaning of the painting, it was the symbol for their life, the turmoil of their childhood, killing the angels that had once been them. The demons in the back had been defeated, however, the night Jessie had found the painting, realized instantly what it meant, and they had given themselves to one

another, body and soul. Their personal demons had been defeated, and now that they had each other, their lives would forever be complete.

@---

"James something is definitely wrong," Jessie said kicking the scale. James poked his head into the bathroom warily, Jessie had been quite moody lately and he feared seeing what the scale read. Jessie saw his timid expression in the mirror and rolled her eyes. "I'm not gonna hit you James, come in here," she said. James smiled and came in wrapping his arms about her waist, the hand he wore his wedding ring on entwining with the same one Jessie wore hers on.

She sighed happily as he kissed her lovingly on the neck and nuzzled her cheek affectionately. "I'm sure it's nothing, come to bed Jess," he encouraged. Jessie kissed him back lightly on the lips and nodded. "Alright James," she said. "Perhaps youse two shoulda laid off a while ago," Meowth said, who had been sitting in the doorway the whole time. "Who asked you?" James asked. "No one, I'm just sayin' is all, youse two is gonna be closa dan eva now!" he mused sauntering away.

Jessie and James exchanged nervous glances and dashed out the door. "Meowth! What on earth are you talking about!?" Jessie screeched. "Nothin'! But don't expect me ta baby sit!" he called back as the pursuit grew hotter. "Baby sit? What?! How do you know?!" Jessie shot angrily as the chase continued to the darkened backyard.

The two humans' shouts grew quieter in the bird's ears as he grew tired of his perch, lofting into the night sky deftly. It trilled victoriously as its shadow crossed the moon, a bright streak of hope across the darkness, and the Nightingale sang at Midnight one last time.

Fini @---

End  
file.